From: Chris Longbottom

More Missing Tissue — Governor Connally's Chest Wound

To add to JFK's missing brain and the tissues taken during the autopsy to make slides, study of the HSCA Appendix volumes reveals yet more tissue is missing. It is a crucial piece of tissue since examination of it would almost certainly confirm or refute the "single-bullet theory".

In his interview with Andy Purdy and Dr. Charles Petty on November 9th 1977 Dr. Shaw, the surgeon who operated on Governor Connally's chest, stated that the rear entrance wound to Governor Connally's back/chest was 1½ cm. in length and that "the ragged edges of the wound were surgically cut away, effectively enlarging it to 3 cms." (7HSCA 326). The excision of this tissue around the margin of this entry wound is noted in Dr. Shaw's original operative notes:— "Attention was next turned to the wound of entrance. It was excised with an elliptical incision."

Yet according to Dr. Charles Petty's report on his examination of the tissues from Governor Connally's wounds the only tissues provided by Dr. V. Stembridge were from the right wrist and left thigh — there is no mention of any tissue from the chest. "Panel member Dr. Petty obtained the paraffin blocks containing ~~excised~~ tissue excised from the wrist and thigh of Governor Connally from Vernie A. Stembridge M.D., the original examining surgical pathologist." (7HSCA 162)

Dr. Petty had contacted Dr. Stembridge; Petty wrote: "The surgical pathology report signed by Vernie A. Stembridge, M.D. is numbered 563-6750. The description is of three specimens and the microscopic examination of the three slides made from these three specimens. Doctor Vernie A. Stembridge was contacted by me and delivered to me not only the three microscopic slides prepared from the specimens removed from John B. Connally, but also the remaining tissue embedded in paraffin which had still been preserved."

Visual and microscopic examination of this excised chest entry wound tissue would allow a determination of whether the marginal abrasions caused by the entering bullet were uniform around the entire margin of the wound or whether the abrasion collar was asymmetrical. A uniform abrasion collar would indicate a tumbling bullet (i.e. confirm the single-bullet theory) whereas an asymmetrical abrasion collar with undermining of the tissue at some point would indicate

~~[illegible]~~ the entry of a pristine non-tumbling bullet (i.e. refute the S.B.T.) (see 7 HSCA 164-7 – N.B. ~~[illegible]~~ figures 46 and 47 are transposed.)

Where is this tissue? Is there any mention of it in the report by Dr. Stembridge? Has there been a mix-up in the identification of the existing excised tissues? Why did none of the Forensic Pathology Panel for the HSCA note the absence of this crucial piece of tissue?

I wrote to Dr. Petty regarding this missing tissue – his reply, dated Nov. 10, 1981, states: "I am not aware of any record of excised tissue from the wound of Governor Connally being examined."

I also wrote to Dr. Stembridge but with no reply.

Perhaps U.S. researchers might pursue this matter further since I can go no further.